



PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF) for INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES

DHR No. (to be completed by DHR staff) _____

Purpose of Evaluation

Please use the following space to explain briefly why you are seeking an evaluation of this property.

To determine if building can be classified as a historic landmark in Virginia.

Are you interested in applying for State and/or Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits? Yes ☒ No ☐

Are you interested in receiving more information about DHR's easement program? Yes ☒ No ☐

1. General Property Information

Property name: Possums General Store

Property address: 914 Old Blue ridge Turnpike

City or Town: Criglersville

Zip code: 22727

Name of the Independent City or County where the property is located: Criglersville, Madison County

Category of Property (choose only one of the following):

Building ☒ Site ☐ Structure ☐ Object ☐

2. Physical Aspects

Acreage: .38

Setting (choose only one of the following):

Urban ☐ Suburban ☐ Town ☐ Village ☒ Hamlet ☐ Rural ☐

Briefly describe the property's overall setting, including any notable landscape features:

The building is an old general store in Criglersville, one of the oldest villages in Madison County, Virginia. It is on the corner of Old Blue Ridge Turnpike and Poor House Rd. Located on the Robison River at the base of White Oak Canyon and Old Rag Mountain. On the edge of Shenandoah National Park, it borders much of the land allocated to the park in the 1930's, including Weakly Hollow, Nicholson Hollow and Corbin Hollow. It is a central location in the village of Criglersville, and is located near junctures of the Rose, Rapidan and Robinson Rivers. Criglersville borders a Wildlife Management Area and the Shenandoah National Park.

Directly across from the store is an old barn that was used as a hospital during the Civil War (Photo 1) and a small building that was used as a voting place and jail.

3. Architectural Description

Architectural Style(s): Country Store Circa 1860. Balloon
Frame

If the property was designed by an architect, landscape architect, engineer, or other professional, please list here: unknown

If the builder is known, please list here: unknown

Date of construction (can be approximate): 1880's with an older foundation dating approximately 1850's

Narrative Description:

In the space below, briefly describe the general characteristics of the entire property, such as its current use (and historic use if different), as well as the primary building or structure on the property (such as a house, store, mill, factory, depot, bridge, etc.). Include the architectural style, materials and method(s) of construction, physical appearance and condition (exterior and interior), and any additions, remodelings, or other alterations.

The building has functioned as a general store since its establishment in the early 1800s. It was originally named McAllisters General Store. The store later became known as The Mountain Store and remained so until 2014 (Photo 1).

The building is the only structure on the property and dates to circa 1880. It is a wood structure built with ballooned framing and wood siding. (Photos 2-5) The roof beams are chestnut and are harvested from local chestnut trees (pre-dating the American chestnut blight in 1935) (Photo 6). The foundation beams are black locust and range in size, from 2"x8" to 8"x8", spanning the 60 ft. length of the building (Photos 7).

The store has many of its original features including long countertops (Photos 8-10), embossed tin ceiling (Photos 11-12), glass case and old safe (Photo 13), wall shelves (Photo 14), and hand-painted signs on the front windows (Photo 15-16).

The building has two floors and an attic. The first floor has original wood walls in a horizontal and herringbone pattern and is in excellent condition (Photo 17). The first floor, which was the store area, is original and in excellent condition. The ceiling is an original tin ceiling with only 6 tiles replaced (Photos 11-12). The floors are oak and are original. The staircase to the second floor is original and in good condition (Photo 18). The front windows and doors are original and the front windows have original handprinted signs for "Coke", etc. (Photos 15-16) The double front doors are original with replacement glass on one side, the original store bell is above the door.

The first floor has the original pine and oak shelving and drawers that run the full length of the first floor (Photo 10). The first floor is approximately 32 ft. wide (across the front) and 60 ft. long (front to back) (Photo 19). All of the counters are original and remain on the first floor. The side room (next to the main store area) is approximately 60 ft. x 10 ft. and has the main staircase and two original large loading doors that open to the outside (Photos 18, 20-21). A well and septic were added to the building in 2017 and a bathroom was also added to the side room. The bathroom was added to the interior and so there are no extended additions to the outside of the original building (Photo 20).

The second floor is divided into three sections, two for storage and one for living quarters. The original oak floors and chestnut framing on the second floor are intact and in good condition.

The attic is a single open space with exposed chestnut beams and original framing, all in good condition. The ceiling of the main room is suspended by 3/4" steel rods that hang from (and are attached to) the main beams in the attic.

The exterior is wood siding, some original and some replacement wood siding, matching the original siding. There is a large covered front porch with heavy oak decking and a standing metal seam roof (Photos 22-23). The main roof was replaced approximately 20 years ago and is a shingle roof. The windows are in fair condition and appear to be original (Photo 4).

An older stone foundation remains intact below the current building and is thought to have been built around around the 1850's, the size is approximately 28 ft. x 30 ft. and it is made of stone and mortar (Photo 24). The original floors from this structure remain under the current floor and are oak (Photo 25).

Briefly describe any outbuildings or secondary resources (such as barns, sheds, dam and mill pond, storage tanks, scales, railroad spurs, etc.), including their condition and their estimated construction dates.

There are no secondary buildings

4. Property's History and Significance

In the space below, briefly describe the history of the property, such as significant events, persons, and/or families associated with the property. Please list all sources of information used to research the history of the property. (It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or family genealogies to this form.)

If the property is important for its architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, or other aspects of design, please include a brief explanation of this aspect.

The original store was called McAllisters General Store and is dated circa 1880's (Photo 26). The original McAllister family came to Virginia in 1654. The McAllisters first settled in Orange County and later moved to Madison county. Finley John McAllister was born in Madison County in 1720 (<http://genrecrds.org/vafiles/>). Lying close to the Robinson River and within the flood plain, the general store weathered the terrible floods in Madison County in 1994-95, remaining largely unscathed.

An approximate history of store ownership, since the 1880's, obtained from the Madison County Deed Books, is provided below. The Clore family, who owned the property in the 1880's still runs the prominent Clore Furniture factory in Madison.

2018: James M. Howe & Renee L. Balfour (Online)

2014: James K. Durham (Online)

2013: Tony D. & Vicki Lam, previously Richard W. and Tony D. Lam (Online)

2004: Ronald M. & Karin M. Pereira (Online)

1984: David W. Walden, Willa C. Gaitanis & Benita A. Sidwell (Book 171, Page 461)

1971: William H. and Mary Sue Seale (Book 141, Page 130)

1955: Robert E. Gibbs (Addie Lee) (Book 72, Page 384)

1947: James P. and Frankie C. Carpenter (Book 63, Page 228)

1940: M. W. and Lillie Rosser (Book 57, Page 167)

1933: E. M. McCallister (Book 51, Page 438)

1917: E. M. McCallister (Book 43, Page 109); reference also K. Y. Shotwell (Book 43, Page 99)

1911: George E. & Annie L. Aylor (Book 40, Page 598)

1911: Annie S. Lewis (Book 40, Page 99); maybe J. H. Clore (Book 33, Page 698)

1902: Phoebe E. Smith

1889: Ida C. Clore (Book 30, Page 353) from J. H. Clore

1887: J. H. Clore from John K. & M. A. Rosser (Book 29, Page 434) North side of Blue Ridge Turnpike and West side of F. T. Road

The old-time General Store was a symbol of enterprise and community. During the 19th and early 20th century a general store could be found in almost every community. Although many of these stores no longer exist, the Criglersville store remains, presenting its original interior and exterior. As well as being a central place to

purchase provisions and house the post office, the store has a long history as a social center for the community and has been a gathering place for many generations. In a rural area it was a beacon, and for rural families a trip to the general store was a social event.

“Many remember with great fondness the family shopping trips, penny candies, and the shared philosophy around the pot belly stove in winter, or sitting upon the broad front porch in summer. Among other focal points of a small town, such as school, church, and courthouse, the country store was the life blood of the community” (from Kathy Weiser - Legends of America, May 2017).

Generations of local families have visited the store and continue to come to the store and share stories (Photo 27). Family names from the original founding families in 1720 include Clore, Tanner, Crigler, Utz, Nichols, and Yager. Additional families original to the area are Mcallister, Corbin, McDaniels, Weakley, Graves and Hurt. These families remain in the area and several recent stories about their memories of the store are provided below:

“I remember getting my first toy in the store. I was just a small kid, one of my first memories. They were slaughtering the hogs and rendering the fat into lard. The lard was put in big buckets and half covered with the lid to let it cool. I thought id go over and watch and I sat on a bucket and fell in the hot lard, my aunt grabbed me. The doctor came to my house everyday until I was well enough. I remember my mom and dad taking me to the store, I remember getting my first toy. It was a red steamroller.” - Everett Weakly, age 87, January 24, 2019.

“I remember going to school down the road and Mrs. Gibbs was our teacher, she was a wonderful teacher. She really liked me and my friend and she would let us get away with a lot. If me and my friend had a nickel between us, she would let us sneak down to the store and we would get a Coca Cola and share it between the two of us.” - Joan Tanner, age 84, January 24, 2019.

“During World War II people would go to the store and listen to Edward R. Murrow war reports. Sometimes there'd be as many as thirty people.” - Jimmy Graves, January 26th, 2019.

The road in front of the store has a rich history during the Civil War. Both Confederate and Union troops came through Criglersville, passing the store on Old Blue Ridge Turnpike, formally the Gordonsville -New Market Turnpike. The turnpike was one of the original roads through Fishers Gap and Miliams Pass into the Shenandoah Valley.

Accounts of the civil war history in Criglersville can be found in the diary of a young girl, Mary Stickler. On July 19th, 1862 she describes, “General Hatche’s brigade of 4000 calvary soldiers passed here this evening, going from Culpepper to Rappahannock. They halted a short time, not knowing where to turn off the pike.”

On November 25th 1862, Stonewall Jackson’s army of 17,000 men camped a mile from the store on their way to meet Lee at Fredericksburg (Photo 28). The column of men, wagons and artillery was over 16 miles long (local Civil war historian Thomas McDaniels).

“Near the top, as we were marching , there was a rock, and looking back down the road, we could see six lines of our army; in one place infantry, in another artillery, in another ambulances and wagons.” (quote by Private John H Worsham of the 21st Virginia Infantry, who wrote about the armies crossing through Fishers Gap).

The store was often visited by President Herbert Hoover and his wife Lou Henry Hoover (Photo 29).

In 1928 Herbert Hoovers aide Lawrence Richey was asked to find a getaway with three requirements: 1) the camp had to be on a trout stream, 2) within 100 miles of Washington, and 3) at an elevation of 2,500 feet. William E Carson, chairman of the Virginia State Conservation and Development Commission suggested a Madison County site and secured fishing rights along the Radian River. A 6.7 mile road was built to this site and became known as Radian Camp, the first presidential retreat.

The Hoovers came to the camp in February 1929 and got as far as Criglersville and then there was no road. “So they get on horseback and ride in on horse.” (John Moccasin, Rapp News, July 2018)

Guest to the camp, who also passed by/through the store included Mr. & Mrs. Charles Lindbergh, Mrs. Thomas Edison, Mr. & Mrs. Edsel Ford, British Prime Minister Ramsay McDonald. (nps.gov)